



Counselor's Corner

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The Homework Battle

Does your home often feel like a battle zone when you say it's time for homework? Do your children "forget" to do their homework? Is "I'll do it later," a common reply? If you can relate, here are a few tips to help find peace with homework in your home.

"I'll do it later" and "I already did my homework"

Arguing about when homework will be done each night is a common occurrence in many households. Children will try and put it off as long as possible. It is best to have your child do his/her homework at the same time every day. One of the most important things you can do is to sit down with your child and establish a daily homework time. Write the schedule down and place it in a visible area like the refrigerator. This sends the message to your child that homework is a priority in your household. Work should usually come before play, especially if the child is having difficulty or completing assignments. When your child is finished with his/her homework, check to see that he/she has finished everything. Offer positive feedback before critiquing your child's work. If your child is the type to rush through his/her work, make homework time a set amount of time. If he/she finishes early, then he/she can use the extra time to read or study for a test.

"I forgot it."

For many students, remembering to write their assignments down or bringing their homework home is not a priority. First, have your child brainstorm several strategies that will help him/her remember. In addition to these strategies, it is essential to motivate these students to be more responsible.

This can be accomplished through reinforcers and consequences. It may be helpful to create a contract in which the child earns points for remembering his/her homework. The points can then be traded-in for daily, weekly, or long-term reinforcers such as a special treat, extra TV time, or more time before bed. If your child continues to forget his/her homework, it will be time to implement consequences. A combination of strategies to remember, reinforcers, and consequences will help the "I forgot it" syndrome.

"I need your help!"

If your child demands your help for every assignment, here are some helpful strategies. First, make sure your child understands the assignment. Read the directions together. If necessary, guide him/her through the first couple of questions. Then, explain that you expect him/her to work independently on the rest of the assignment, but will check his/her work at the end. Acknowledge that it may be hard, and reassure your child that he/she can do it. If your child demands that you stay, continue to reassure him/her and calmly say (like a broken record) that you cannot do his/her homework for him/her. When you check back on your child, praise your child for the efforts, however small, he/she made on his/her own. Be careful to give plenty of positives before critiquing his/her work. When correcting your child's work, acknowledge that the question may be confusing or challenging. Reinforce through positives that your child is bright, capable, and can persevere even through difficult assignments.

Reference: Homework Without Tears
Lee Canter 1987